

THE DAILY PIC

Blake Gopnik's Latest Sightings
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Daily Pic: An Early Elegy for the Breuer Whitney



This is an image of – or inside – an installation by Zoe Leonard called “945 Madison Avenue,” which turns a large room on the fourth floor of the Whitney into a giant camera obscura, covering its walls with an image of the world just beyond the museum’s facade. I like the way there’s almost nothing to the piece – its materials are listed as “lens and darkened room” – and how what it looks like is entirely contingent on the changing scene outside. You don’t get more immaterial, and less market-friendly, than that. You can’t even sell the idea of this piece, because if it were installed elsewhere it would be an entirely different work. But despite the installation’s apparent modesty, it does a great job making the Brutalist bulk of the Whitney’s Breuer building seem to disappear, as though we were sitting inside the footprint of the building after its demolition, with only the cityscape all around it for company. While no one is talking about tearing down the Breuer structure itself, even after the Whitney leaves for its new downtown digs, Leonard’s elegiac piece conveys a palpable sense of loss at the approaching break in the institution’s history. (Courtesy Murray Guy, N.Y., and Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne; photo by Bill Orcutt)

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